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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9137
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RUYNAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 1211
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 3572
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 9216
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 1782
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 5001
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6620
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2746
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - THAILAND AIRPORT
CLOSURE AND INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS

11. LEAD STORIES: Most papers gave top play to the 27.3 percent drop in auto sales in Japan in November from a year earlier. The papers also front-paged President-elect Obama's appointment on Monday of Sen. Hilary Clinton as secretary of state.

12. "Reconciliation Necessary for 'Land of Smiles'" The conservative Sankei editorialized (12/2): "An antigovernment group's prolonged seizure of an airport in Bangkok will deal a severe blow to tourism in Thailand. Although the incident illustrates the current political situation in the nation, the seizure will have a great impact on the larger Asian economy given the unprecedented financial crisis. The problem should be immediately resolved."

13. "South Korea Should Not Alter Its Policy Toward North Korea" The business-oriented Nikkei stated in an editorial (12/2): "North Korea adopted tough measures against South Korea by strictly limiting exchanges between the two countries. Although the move appears to be aimed at pressuring the Lee Myung-bak administration, which is reviewing Seoul's Sunshine Policy toward Pyongyang, the ROK government should neither overreact to Pyongyang's move nor easily alter its policy toward North Korea.... Some observers are of the opinion that North Korea is trying to cause splits among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea ahead of the launch of the Obama administration.... Deterioration of North-South relations would be a worrisome factor on the Korean Peninsula. We hope the ROK government will swiftly analyze the political situation in the North while maintaining its principle of not giving support to Pyongyang until it abandons its nuclear arms."

